Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965)

Table of Contents

1. Background
2. Works (Selected List)
3. Themes
4. Outline of Major Works
5. Relation to Other Thinkers
6. Bibliography and Works Cited
7. Internet Resources
8. Related Topics

A polymath talent, Albert Schweitzer made major scholarly contributions to music and biblical studies in the early years of the twentieth century. His decision to abandon an academic career to seek a more practical way of serving his fellow human beings as a medical missionary in Africa inspired many people to support his efforts and resulted in a legacy of humanitarian service that is still active today.

1. Background

Family

Albert Schweitzer was born on 14th January 1875 at Kaysersberg in Upper Alsace, Germany, a region that is now part of France. His father, Louis Schweitzer, was pastor to a Lutheran congregation at Kaysersberg. Shortly after Schweitzer's birth his father moved to Günsbach in the Münster Valley. Schweitzer, by his own admission, enjoyed a happy childhood and adolescence (Schweitzer, 1931b, 11). At an early age, he demonstrated great proficiency in music. He attributed his lifelong interest in organ music and the construction of organs to his paternal grandfather. Schweitzer first played as a replacement organist for a church service at age nine.

Education

He entered the Gymnasium (secondary school) at Müllhausen in Alsace in 1885 and subsequently passed his leaving examination in June 1893. Following a brief period in Paris, where he studied organ music, Schweitzer entered Strasburg University and took up residence at the Theological College of St. Thomas. He continued to study under some of Europe's premier organists and eventually became an authority on the life and music of J.S.Bach. Schweitzer became recognized as one of the world's foremost authorities on building organs. His passion for organ music paralleled his fascination with theology. Schweitzer entered Strassburg University in October 1893 to study theology and philosophy. In his first year he applied himself to learning Hebrew and studying the Synoptic Gospels (Mathew, Mark, and Luke) under Heinrich Julius Holtzmann (1832-1910), a leading figure in the field of New Testament studies. Schweitzer attended Holtzmann's lectures and paid close attention to his commentary on Matthew. He began a year of military service in April 1894, although he was permitted to continue to attend lectures at Strasburg University. In the autumn of 1894 Schweitzer set out on military maneuvers and packed a Greek New Testament in his

haversack with the intention of acquiring a detailed knowledge of the text. A careful reading of Matthew chapters ten and eleven in his spare time while on military service prompted Schweitzer to reach very different conclusions to those that had been advocated in a series of lectures on the Synoptic Gospels at Strassburg University by Holtzmann, who dismissed any notion that eschatological views on the lips of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels could possibly be original to Jesus. The sayings of Jesus about the future coming of the Son of Man must have been made up by the Early Church and imposed upon the historical Jesus. Schweitzer, however, saw no grounds for regarding the eschatological passages in the Synoptic Gospels as extraneous. He also disputed spiritualized interpretation placed upon the eschatological passages. Furthermore, Schweitzer thought it unlikely that the Early Church would have attributed to Jesus words about future events that never occurred. He felt it was more probable that the Early Christians had accurately preserved words spoken by Jesus and incorporated them in the Gospels even though they posed serious difficulties because of the non-occurrence of the events foretold:

The bare text compelled me to assume that Jesus really announced persecutions for the disciples and, as a sequel to them, the immediate appearance of the celestial Son of Man, and that His announcement was shown by subsequent events to be wrong. But how came He to entertain such an expectation, and what must His feelings have been when events turned out otherwise than He had assumed they would? (Schweitzer, 1931b, 18)

By the end of his first year of theological studies Schweitzer found himself in disagreement with the conventional wisdom about the words and actions of Jesus typical of German New Testament scholarship. Schweitzer appealed to the plain meaning of the text. He believed that Jesus had announced the imminent arrival of a supernatural Kingdom of God. Spiritual reinterpretations of the Kingdom of God divorced Jesus from his historical context. Schweitzer pursued independent study of the Synoptic Gospels and problems associated with the life of Jesus, often neglecting other subjects from his first year in university onwards.

He submitted a dissertation on the philosophy of Immanuel Kant to earn the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in July 1899. Schweitzer spent the summer of 1899 in Berlin and availed himself of the city's intellectual and cultural riches. He attended the lectures of several prominent scholars including Adolf von Harnack (1851-1930). Friends introduced Schweitzer to Harnack and the young student visited the elder statesman of historical scholarship in his home, but confessed, in later life, to shyness in the presence of the great man.

Schweitzer next turned his attention to study for the Licentiate in Theology. He wrote a dissertation on the Last Supper to earn the degree in July 1900. A second work *The Secret of the Messiahship and the Passion: A Sketch of the Life of Jesus* published in 1901 secured a teaching post for Schweitzer at the University of Strassburg. (The English edition was published as *The Mystery of the Kingdom of God* in 1914.) This latter piece of scholarship articulated Schweitzer's understanding of the historical Jesus. Schweitzer identified four presuppositions upon which the "modern-historical" view of Jesus is based. First, Jesus was portrayed as enjoying an initial period of success followed by a period of failure. Second, Jesus rejected a supernatural Messianic Kingdom and in its place announced an ethical Kingdom of God. Third, Pauline theory of Atonement influenced the formation of the Synoptic traditions of the prediction of the Passion. Fourth, the prediction of the Passion was expressed in the form of an ethical reflection. Schweitzer rejected these presuppositions and put forward an alternative understanding of the historical Jesus that he called the "eschatological-historical":

Like his contemporaries he [Jesus] identifies the Messiah with the "Son of Man," who is spoken of in the Book of Daniel, and speaks of his coming on the clouds of heaven. The Kingdom of God which he preaches is the heavenly, Messianic Kingdom, which will be set up on earth when the Son of Man comes at the end of the natural world's existence. He continually exhorts his hearers to be ready at any moment for judgment, as a result of which some will enter into the glory of the Messianic Kingdom, while others will depart to damnation… In no way does He attempt to spiritualize it. But He fills it with His own powerful ethical spirit, in that, passing beyond the Law and the scribes, He demands from men the practice of the absolute ethic of love as the proof that they belong to God and to the Messiah, and that they are predestined to membership of the coming Kingdom (Schweitzer, 1931b, 49-50).

Jesus combined an expectation of a supernatural appearance of the Kingdom of God with an ethical religion of love. He expected a dramatic and decisive end to the world. The Kingdom of God is an entirely future reality. Jesus believed that with the manifestation of the Messianic Kingdom he would be revealed as the Messiah. His Messianic identity is a secret to be maintained until the supernatural appearing of the Kingdom of God.

Academic Career

On March 1st, 1902, Schweitzer delivered his first lecture before the Theology Faculty at Strassburg. His initial lectures were on the Fourth Gospel and the Pastoral Epistles. However, a conversation with students about a lecture series they had attended on the Life of Jesus in which very little had been mentioned about previous studies inspired Schweitzer to offer a series of lectures in the summer term of 1905 on the history of research into the Life of Jesus. The subject captured his imagination and Schweitzer devoured the vast collection of Lives of Jesus held by the University Library at Strassburg. His study was cluttered for months with books as he pursued his inquiry. Each individual Life of Jesus was categorized and stacked up in an appropriate pile. Visitors had to wind their way in between the mountains of books. His findings were published in 1906 in the book that would be presented in English under the title *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (1910). A second German edition was published in 1913, but did not appear in English until 2001.

Medical Missionary and Peace Activist

Schweitzer's personal outlook on life was long marked by a powerful desire to serve his fellow human beings. In 1904 Schweitzer read an article in a publication of the Paris Missionary Society appealing for trained physicians to work in the French Congo, now Gabon. The article stirred a response in Schweitzer and he resolved to abandon scholarly careers in music and theology to train as a doctor and offer his services as a medical missionary. Family, friends, and colleagues attempted to dissuade Schweitzer from embarking upon such a course of action, but to no avail. He remained firm in his determination to train as a doctor. At age thirty he commenced a further eight years of study in medicine. Schweitzer qualified as a doctor eight years later with a specialization in tropical medicine and surgery. He had reorganized his priorities in life to respond to the urgent appeal issued by the Paris Missionary Society and at age thirty-eight he was now in a position to tender his services. His initial application to the Paris Missionary Society was rejected on the basis of his liberal theological views. In response, Schweitzer and his wife set about raising funds from friends and sympathizers to set up and finance the first two years of operation of a new hospital to be based at Lambarene in the French Congo. Thus able to present significant resources to assist the medical missionary work of the Paris Missionary Society and undertaking not to upset the beliefs of fellow missionaries and converts, Schweitzer was finally accepted. One member of the Society's board

resigned in protest at Schweitzer's appointment. Schweitzer and his wife set out for Africa in March 1913. As a consequence of the outbreak of war in 1914 the Schweitzers, as German citizens in a French colony, were interned in a camp in the Pyrenees. Following the end of the Great War (1914-1918), the Schweitzers returned to Alsace, where their daughter, Rhena, was born in January 1919. Schweitzer returned to Africa in 1924 and remained at Lambarene for the rest of his life. He continued to write, producing memoirs of his experiences and reflections from Africa, and developed an ethical principle that he described as "reverence for life". His contribution to humanitarian work was acknowledged in 1953 with the award of the Nobel Peace Prize for 1952. The advent of the atomic bomb perplexed Schweitzer and served to confirm his conviction that Western Civilization was on a downward spiral into decay and brutality. Nonetheless, he entered the fray of public debate in an attempt to persuade the nations of the world to choose a different path to the one offered by atomic warfare. Albert Schweitzer died in Lambaren on 4th September 1965 at the age of ninety.

2. Works (Selected List)

Schweitzer authored a body of work that covered a broad range of topics including biblical studies, philosophy, music, autobiography and his work as a medical missionary. *The Mystery of the Kingdom of God* (1901), *J. S. Bach* (1905), *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (1906), *Paul and His Interpreters: A Critical History* (1911), *The Psychiatric Study of Jesus* (1913), *On the Edge of the Primeval Forest* (1920), *Cultural Philosophy I: The Decay and Restoration of Civilization* (1923), *Cultural Philosophy II: Civilization and Ethics* (1923), *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle* (1930), *More from the Primeval Forest* (1931), *Out of My Life and Thought* (1931), *More from my African Notebook* (1938), *Peace or Atomic War?*(1958).

3. Themes

Eschatology

Schweitzer put eschatology back on the map in biblical studies. *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (1906) exposed the limitations of the many attempts to probe the life of Jesus that detached him from the cultural context of Judaism in the ancient world and thus ignored the eschatological expectation of the Kingdom of God in the ministry and message of Jesus. Schweitzer, in the course of his review of German New Testament scholarship, mediated the little-known conclusions of Johannes Weiss about the eschatological character of Jesus' understanding of the Kingdom of God to a wider audience within German scholarship. *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* attracted the attention of the two most influential New Testament scholars in England, F.C. Burkitt (1864-1935) of Cambridge and W. H. Sanday (1843-1920) of Oxford, soon after it appeared in German. Schweitzer gained impact, because his book was translated into English within four years of its publication in Germany. His views became accessible to an English language audience very quickly, unlike other seminal German scholars. For example, Ernst Troeltsch's *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches* was published in German in 1912 and was not translated into English until 1931. *The Epistle to the Romans* by Karl Barth was published in German in 1918, but had to wait fifteen years before an English edition was produced in 1933.

Mysticism

Schweitzer concluded that Jesus died a deluded prophet of a supernatural Kingdom of God that never broke into history. He was, therefore, faced with a problem. How to account for the ongoing devotion to

Jesus Christ, the missionary work of Paul the Apostle, and the continuation of the Christian Church beyond the life of Christ down to the present age? Schweitzer replicated the kind of methodology he applied to the Life of Jesus studies in *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* to the interpreters of Saint Paul in *Paul and His Interpreters* (1911). Schweitzer identified Paul as the one who solved the dilemma created for Christians by the death of Jesus and the non-appearance of the Kingdom of God that he proclaimed by means of a Christ mysticism that became central to Christian belief and experience.

Ethics

Schweitzer was challenged by the ethical demand of Jesus and what this may mean for Christians today and especially for his own life. Schweitzer came to embody the principle of self-denying service for others in his decision to train as a doctor and embark upon a new vocation as a medical missionary in Africa. The ethical principle of 'reverence for life' became the watchword for his own commitment to act for others and the message that he increasingly sought to communicate to a world seemingly marching towards atomic warfare.

4. Outline of Major Works

The Quest of the Historical Jesus

The Quest of the Historical Jesus (originally titled *Von Reimarus zu Wrede*) reviewed the development of Life of Jesus research in German scholarship from Hermann Samuel Reimarus (1694-1768) in the eighteenth century to William Wrede (1859-1906) at the turn of the twentieth century. Schweitzer characterized the quest of the historical Jesus as German scholarship's search for the truth whatever it may be and wherever it may lead. *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* is narrated in heroic terms as a splendid endeavor that has made a major contribution to the sum of human knowledge.

Schweitzer noted that Luther was not interested in comprehending Jesus within his first- century Jewish context or resolving difficulties and inconsistencies such as the place of the cleansing of the Temple in the ministry of Jesus. The Enlightenment created the climate within which Reimarus might question the New Testament tradition about Jesus of Nazareth. Reimarus was not an objective observer. He sought to discredit Christianity by demonstrating that it rested upon flawed historical foundations. According to Reimarus Jesus expected the people of Israel to rise up under his leadership, but his fellow countrymen did not. Jesus died as a failure. The disciples responded to the failure of Jesus' mission by reinterpreting their Messianic hope in future supernatural terms and proclaiming that he had been 'raised', and waited for the Messiah to appear. In the hands of Reimarus history erodes traditional theology. Schweitzer commended Reimarus for recognizing that Jesus lived in an apocalyptic environment.

Schweitzer portrayed Reimarus as initiating *The Quest of the Historical* Jesus. The work of David Friedrich Strauss represented a decisive turning point in Life of Jesus research. *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined* appeared in 1835 and strove to reinterpret Christianity in line with rationalism and speculative Hegelian philosophy. Miracles were ruled out on *a priori* grounds. Strauss was especially effective in dismantling rationalized accounts of miracles. Strauss applied mythological explanations to the Gospels. He thus followed in the footsteps of biblical scholars that had applied mythological explanations to the Old Testament. A generation elapsed between the death of Jesus and the writing of the Gospels. Enough time passed for historical material to get mixed up with myth. Schweitzer concurred with Strauss, in part, "No

sooner is a great man dead than legend is busy with his life" (Schweitzer, 1906, 79). No doubt, according to Schweitzer, mythical material ended up in such stories as the feeding of the multitudes. However, the existence of such stories in the Synoptic tradition cannot simply be explained by reference to Old Testament stories such as the manna in the desert. Such episodes in the life of Jesus must have been based on some kind of fact even if it is obscure to us now. Identifying the source of the form in which a story is told in the New Testament, for example, under the influence of an Old Testament narrative, does not account for the origin of the event. Strauss overstated his case.

Ernest Renan's *Life of Jesus* (1865) portrayed Jesus as a timeless figure devoid of vitality. His account was a classic expression of the liberal Lives of Jesus that Schweitzer reacted against so strongly in his reading of the Synoptic Gospels. Schweitzer contended that the liberal Lives of Jesus made Jesus approximate to the psychology, values, and outlook of the authors that wrote about him. Jesus simply became a reflection of the scholars examining his life. Schweitzer believed Reimarus had been correct to locate Jesus in the context of first-century Judaism. The liberal Lives of Jesus were essentially unhistorical accounts of Jesus. A truly historic understanding of Jesus had to see him in the context he inhabited. From this perspective Schweitzer sketched out his own distinctive understanding of the historical Jesus.

Schweitzer felt that the fruit of historical scholarship, exemplified in Weiss' recovery of the eschatological perspective on Jesus, challenged the theologies current in his own generation. His review of Life of Jesus research called into question the liberal portrait of Jesus as an ethical personality who established the Kingdom of God.

Schweitzer's outline of Jesus stressed the distance between the historical Jesus and Schweitzer's own generation. Jesus believed he was the Messiah and expected God to intervene in history and bring the world to an end in the course of his ministry. The expected end did not materialize, but Jesus bore the suffering destined to sweep over Israel and the world. The personality of Jesus is the link between the historical life of Jesus and Christianity. Jesus summons people to follow him in changing the world. Ironically, the failure of Jesus' hopes when God did not intervene ultimately freed Jesus from the constraints of a Jewish worldview. Schweitzer concluded that Jesus can never be known by means of historical research, but his words cam inspire people in any age. Ironically, the strangeness of Jesus makes it possible to capture the ultimate significance of Jesus. Schweitzer was impressed by the will Jesus exercised in seeking to effect a radical transformation in life in the present, to precipitate the in-breaking of the Kingdom of God, by offering up his life to suffer death on a cross. As Mark Chapman has observed, commenting on Schweitzer's theology, "The ethical will of Christ persisted through time and could enthrall the believer in intensity of desire for the Kingdom. Thus, even though Jesus may have been deluded in his plot to bring about God's Kingdom, his will for transformation could still captivate the individual and inspire ethical service" (Chapman 2001, 76). Schweitzer embodied this outlook on Jesus and the ethical response demanded by him in the decision he made to work as a medical missionary in Africa.

Schweitzer's achievement was remarkable. He reviewed, summarized, and critiqued a vast corpus of research into the Life of Jesus. *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* is significant for several reasons. First, Schweitzer exposed the unhistorical character of a great deal of the Life of Jesus research. Too often the views of modern men had been imposed upon the thinking of a first-century Palestinian Jew. Second, Schweitzer located Jesus in his first-century Jewish context. Schweitzer believed that the historical Jesus could only be properly understood within the world of apocalyptic Judaism. In this respect he builds upon the research and findings of Johannes Weiss. A great part of Schweitzer's significance is that he mediated a controversial development in German New Testament studies to an English speaking audience. Third, he

rescued eschatology, the doctrine of the last things, from the margins of biblical studies and placed it in the center of scholarly discourse about the New Testament. A consequence of this shift in biblical studies is that the path was cleared to assign eschatology a renewed significance in the field of systematic theology. This outcome would be surprising from Schweitzer's point of view, because he believed that Jesus' eschatological perspective had effectively been discredited by the non-occurrence of the supernatural events he had announced in his preaching. Fourth, Schweitzer illustrates that what one believes to be true historically shapes the content of the faith one professes. Thus not believing in the resurrection of Jesus has consequences for the kind of Christianity professed and practiced. Ultimately, as his biblical studies and theological reflection developed beyond the publication of *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* Schweitzer adopted a Christ-mysticism and moved increasingly in the direction of espousing a philosophy of 'reverence for life'. Fifth, Schweitzer does not escape from the very kind of rhetoric that he condemns so effectively on page after page in *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*:

The Baptist appears and cries: "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." Soon after that comes Jesus, and in the knowledge that He is the coming Son of Man lays hold of the wheel of the world to set it moving on that last revolution which is to bring all ordinary history to a close. It refuses to turn, and He throws Himself upon it. Then it does turn; and crushes Him. Instead of bringing in the eschatological conditions, He has destroyed them. The wheel rolls onward, and the mangled body of the one immeasurably great Man, who was strong enough to think of Himself as the spiritual ruler of mankind and to bend history to His purpose, is hanging upon it still. That is His victory and His reign. (Schweitzer, *Ibid*., 370-71)

Schweitzer's rhetoric conveys notes of tragedy and irony in the death of Jesus upon the cross. According to Schweitzer Jesus' mangled body is still hanging on the implacable wheel of history. The image is one of an irresistible force that overwhelmed Jesus of Nazareth in history and still holds him in its power. Yet, simultaneously, this event constitutes a victory and a reign, since the force of Jesus' personality continues to echo down the centuries to the present. In spite of his death, as a prophet who fails to see the eschatological hope he proclaimed realized in his lifetime, Jesus continues to exercise an influence on humanity and the course of history. Schweitzer portrayed Jesus as trying to force the hand of history to usher in the Messianic Kingdom, an interpretation that has been vigorously contested. As Stephen Neil has pointed out, a servant of God in the biblical tradition does not attempt to bend history to serve his desired ends and there is no evidence that Jesus tried to do this (Neil, 1964, 199-200). Such an effort is entirely out of keeping with the Hebrew understanding of God at work in history.

The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle

Schweitzer did not concur with the prevailing opinion in German academic theology that Paul represents an appropriation of Hellenistic or Greek ideas into Christianity. Rather, an eschatological mysticism defines the thought of Paul the Apostle, which he expresses in a form that could later be transposed into a Hellenistic key. Pauline mysticism does not speak of "being one with God or being in God" (Schweitzer, 1930, 3). Sonship to God is not conceived as "an immediate mystical relation to God, but as mediated and effected by means of a mystical union with Christ" (*Ibid*.). Paul does not commend any kind of "God-mysticism" (*Ibid*.). Human beings enter into relation with God by means of a "Christ-mysticism" (*Ibid*.):

The fundamental thought of Pauline mysticism runs thus: I am in Christ; in Him I know myself as a being who is raised above this sensuous, sinful, and transient world and already belongs to the transcendent; in Him I am assured of resurrection; in Him I am a Child of God (*Ibid*.)

A second feature of Paul's mysticism is that the Christian is "conceived as having died and risen again with Him" (*Ibid*.). Hence, the believer has been set free from sin and the Law and now possesses the Spirit of Christ and is assured of resurrection. Paul's notion pf 'being-in-Christ' is the central element of his thought and makes sense of the whole structure of his theology.

The Christ-mysticism experienced by Christians is reckoned by Paul to be a kind of co-experiencing of Christ's death and resurrection:

The original and central idea of the Pauline mysticism is therefore that the Elect share with one another and with Christ a corporeity which is in a special way susceptible to the action of the powers of death and resurrection, and in consequence capable of acquiring the resurrection state of existence before the general resurrection of the dead takes place" (*Ibid*., 115-116).

Redemption is accomplished by Jesus' resurrection. The perishable world is a stage on which angels of heaven and demons do battle. Jesus becomes a Messianic King with command over angels who is able to defeat all who oppose God. For Jesus, this was salvation: deliverance from the coming tribulation of the eschaton. However, for the early Christians the focus of redemption shifted to the forgiveness of sins, an emphasis reflected in the thought of Paul the Apostle. Paul explains the concept of justification by faith alone in the Epistle to the Romans. Christ's death is portrayed as a sin offering, which erases sin and makes God's forgiveness possible. Redemption is an act of ascent, not mystical experience. This "righteousness by faith" is individualistic, detached from participation in the mystical Body of Christ, and it does not lead to an ethical theory:

That it is an unnatural construction of thought is clear from the fact that by means of it Paul arrives at the idea of a faith which rejects not only the works of the Law, but works in general. He thus closes the pathway to a theory of ethics. This is the price which he pays for the possibility of finding the doctrine of freedom from the Law in the doctrine of the atoning death of Jesus (*Ibid*., 225).

Yet, ethics are not absent from the thought of Paul, but they are reconceived. By participating in Christ's death and resurrection, the believer becomes a new creation. In principle the believer is no longer able to sin. However, this participation proceeds gradually making ethics necessary. "It is only in so far as a man is purified and liberated from the world…that he becomes capable of truly ethical action" (*Ibid*., 302). Paul describes ethical action in many ways, including sanctification, giving up the service of sin, and living for God. Love is the highest manifestation of this ethical life. "Love is for him not a ray which flashes from one point to another point, but one which is constantly vibrating to and fro [between the believer and God]" (*Ibid*., 307).

For Schweitzer there is nothing Hellenistic about belief in the coming Kingdom of God, Jesus as Messiah, the atoning death, the resurrection, and the saving effect of baptism. Yet, as Paul worked with these ideas, they became more susceptible to Hellenistic influences. After Paul, Christian thought became increasingly Hellenized, reaching its culmination within the New Testament in the Gospel according to John. The mysticism found in the John's account of Jesus is a Hellenization of Paul's mysticism. Schweitzer concluded that the Hellenistic interpretations of Christianity that followed after Paul are inferior. The mysticism of Hellenized Christianity is simpler and less profound than the mysticism of Paul the Apostle.

5. Relation to Other Thinkers

The interpretation of the historical Jesus as a prophetic figure who preached the imminent irruption of a

supernatural Kingdom of God originated in Germany. Johannes Weiss lay the foundation for the new eschatological perspective on Jesus. Schweitzer effectively mediated Weiss' findings to the English-speaking world. What accounts for the sympathetic reception in England of the new eschatological portrait of Jesus developed in Germany by Weiss and mediated to the English-speaking world by Albert Schweitzer? Mark Chapman in *The Coming Crisis* (2001) has identified three factors that help explain Schweitzer's enormous impact in England. First, Schweitzer's demolition of liberal Lives of Jesus confirmed British biblical scholarship's wariness of much that had flowed from German pens and supported assumptions about the essential reliability of the New Testament account of Jesus (Chapman, 2001, 78). Second, turbulent social conditions in Edwardian England resonated with apocalyptic perspective on the teaching of Jesus and made the new eschatological perspective credible as a way of making sense of Jesus in his first century context (*Ibid*., 11-28). Third, the commanding personalities of Willaim Sanday and F.C. Burkitt, who dominated English theology in Oxford and Cambridge, made a way for Schweitzer to he heard outside his immediate sphere of influence within the German academy (*Ibid*., 58-101).

William Sanday was initially sympathetic to Schweitzer's research as a timely deconstruction of Protestant liberal theological thought. Sanday lectured on *The Life of Christ in Recent Research* and discussed Schweitzer over the course of half the lectures. He offered a cautious approval of the broad thrust of Schweitzer's work. The main reason for his sympathetic reading is that Schweitzer demonstrated a far greater trust in the historical record of the gospels than many New Testament critics. He also agreed with Schweitzer's refusal to explain away anything in the New Testament that does not sit comfortably with a modern worldview. Sanday, however, did not think that Jesus could be accounted for solely in terms of apocalyptic Judaism. Rather, the language of apocalyptic Judaism was the only language available to Jesus and, in reality, more profound powers were operative and manifest in the earthly ministry of Jesus. F.C. Burkitt was a lay Anglican professor of divinity at the University of Cambridge. He was a prominent expert on apocalyptic writings and arrived at the conclusion that Jesus could not be understood apart from the context of first century Jewish apocalyptic thought. Burkitt reached this result independently of Weiss and Schweitzer. Sanday introduced Schweitzer's book to F.C. Burkitt in 1907.

The Quest of the Historical Jesus appeared in an English translation in 1910 and included an appreciative forward by F.C. Burkitt of Cambridge. Burkitt was instrumental in getting Schweitzer's book translated and published in England. He recognized the significance of the issues Schweitzer had raised in his study and admired the technical skill demonstrated in the work. William Sanday of Oxford initially embraced *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* enthusiastically, but subsequently moderated his stance towards Schweitzer's solution. Schweitzer believed Sanday's enthusiasm for his work stemmed from his Anglo-Catholic sensibilities. Sanday warmed to the irony of a Protestant demolishing the Life of Jesus research that had challenged the orthodox belief about Jesus that his Anglo-Catholic faith adhered to. Schweitzer was invited to lecture at both Oxford and Cambridge, but circumstances prevented him from doing so.

The response in Germany and England to *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* was mixed. Yet, ultimately, Schweitzer set the agenda for New Testament studies in England for the next twenty-five years. Certain aspects of his work were deemed to be less than convincing. Schweitzer pressed for the plain meaning of the text in the Synoptic Gospels to be heard. Hence the eschatological passages that point to a future manifestation of the Kingdom of God are to be taken seriously. Yet, it seems that an inner need within Schweitzer for absolute consistency caused him to press all the evidence into one mould. The Kingdom of God is portrayed as entirely future in accordance with Schweitzer's understanding of Jewish conceptions of the Kingdom of God. No allowance is made for those passages that reflect the presence of the Kingdom of God in the here and now. C.H.Dodd (1884-1973) in *The Parables of the Kingdom* (1935) would subsequently

make the case for realized eschatology, the presence of the Kingdom of God here and now in the life and ministry of Jesus.

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7. Internet Resources

Nobel Peace Prize web site entry on Schweitzer

The Albert Schweitzer Page contains reviews of his books and points to relevant web resources.

Schweitzer on Wikipedia

The Albert Schweitzer Fellowship was founded to support his medical work and continues today to support leaders who help underserved communities. The site incorporates useful information on Schweitzer, including photographs.

Digital Christian Library: The text of *Paul and His Interpreters* is available under Schweitzer in Christian Works of the Ages.

Albert Schweitzer Information

International Albert Schweitzer Association web site available in six languages.

Schweitzer on Biographisch-Bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon contains a brief biographical account and an exhaustive bibliography in German.

8. Related Topics

[Forthcoming]

Author: Julian Gotobed, incorporating material submitted by Trevor S. Maloney

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